

E 672
.F65
Copy 1

U. S. GRANT.

EULOGY BY GOVERNOR FORAKER, AT PITTSBURGH,
PENNSYLVANIA,

APRIL 27, 1887.

"U. S. GRANT."

SPEECH OF

HON. JOSEPH B. FORAKER

AT THE D'INNER GIVEN BY THE

AMERICUS CLUB, PITTSBURGH, PA.,

APRIL 27, 1887.

MR. CHAIRMAN AND GENTLEMEN OF THE AMERICUS CLUB
—This is no time for anything more than a mere sketch. I must therefore of necessity omit much that properly belongs to a full consideration and discussion of the life, character and public services of the illustrious man whose name has been proposed. Under such circumstances I know you will pardon me for passing over the entire period of his youth with the single remark that his birth was humble and his boyhood, at least prior to his admission to West Point, comparatively uneventful. The most significant, and probably the only, thing connected with his early history that gave any real promise of his future distinction was the fact that he was born in Ohio. At West Point he was thorough, faithful

and did well, but he was not distinguished. On the contrary he was graded well down the list. In the Mexican war, however, though serving in the humble capacity of a line officer, with but little opportunity to attract attention, he so far succeeded in displaying his high qualities of sound judgment and heroic bravery as to secure commendation for efficient services and promotion for gallant and meritorious conduct. When peace came again he soon tired of the military, and in 1853, led by an ardent love for his wife and family, which, to his and their credit, grew stronger as his honors increased, he resigned his commission and returned to the walks of civil life, where in humble toil and honest poverty he learned new phases of human nature and new lessons of patience and perseverance. Doubtless to many, and probably to none more than to himself, it seemed at that time that his life had been well-nigh wasted. But not so. He had passed through an experience that was well calculated to equip him for the great services he was to render. His case was another striking illustration of the great truth that, in the mysterious ways of Providence, the chosen agents of the Almighty for the accomplishment of His greatest works are usually prepared unawares. The discipline and study of West Point had given him a splendid physical and mental development, while the leisure and quiet of the frontier had given him opportunity to study thoroughly the art of war. And that is not all he had been given opportunity to learn. He served in New York, Missouri, Louisiana, Texas, Michigan, Oregon and California, as well as in Mexico, and thus was enabled to see and learn early in life that the United States comprised a perfectly imperial domain of territory, a vast quantity of which lay west of the city of Buffalo, N. Y. It enabled him also to become practically acquainted with the fact that we had a great variety and di-

versity of soil and climate, and that we were blessed with countless rivers and harbors and lakes, upon whose improvement and general utilization depended, in large degree, the development of that great internal commerce and travel that have contributed so much to the unexampled prosperity which the people of this republic enjoy. He discovered, also, and appreciated the fact, that we had inexhaustible resources of coal, iron, copper, silver, lead and lumber, and every other kind of wealth necessary to the establishment of all the industries essential to diversity of employment, the comfort of man and the absolute independence of the American people. He saw how each and every section of the country was bound together in vital interest with every other, and foresaw with the vision of a statesman and the pride of a soldier the magnificent grandeur that was in store for us as a people if we did but remain bound together in union, and with a common purpose follow a common flag to a common destiny. He saw more than this. He not only learned the value of the Union, but he learned the dangers that threatened its existence, and thus came to hate with all the detestation that could be born of a loyalty that no language can exaggerate, the infamous doctrines that were promulgated for its overthrow. The consequence was that although the war found him in obscurity yet it found him peculiarly fitted for the work he was to do. All this is easily seen and understood now, but it was not so then. He seems to have been the only man in the Union who was conscious that he was qualified to serve his country with efficiency in that great emergency; and, evidently, he had no adequate conception of his capabilities in that respect. His first appearance was at the head of a company of only one hundred men, and all he asked was, to use his own language, an opportunity to serve the country that had educated him in

any position where it was thought he might be useful." It was the 15th day of June, two months after Fort Sumter was fired upon and two months after he made this appeal, before his services were accepted, and he was given a commission.

What could seem more incredible than that a man who was so humble and obscure when the war commenced that he was compelled to stand waiting and importuning for two long months before he was allowed to take the field, should achieve such distinguished success that when the war ended he would command all the armies of the Union and be idolized by the whole country as the most renowned general of modern time? And yet such is the wonderfully thrilling story that future generations are to read in the history of that great struggle. To the latest day the record of his achievements will challenge the admiration of the world, excite the patriotic pride of his countrymen and arouse the affectionate regard of every lover of liberty, law and government on the face of the earth. But how does the most that posterity can possibly know compare with the least that every loyal, patriotic man was made to feel, as, amid the lowering clouds and flaming fires of that great contest, we saw him bearing the flag of the Union in triumph as he carved his way to victory? When the war broke upon us we knew but little of what it involved, yet we knew enough to know that we were quite unprepared for it. We knew we had no army, and we knew we had no generals. We had only faith in the righteousness of our cause, the patriotism of the people, and that we were in the hands of an overruling, guiding and protecting Providence. Having only such knowledge we were ready to go forward boldly enough, but we felt that we were necessarily going forward blindly, and hence it was that the defeat at Bull Run, followed by

reverses elsewhere, bred dissension and distrust, and created alarm and apprehension, and, in consequence, we entered upon the second year of the war enveloped in a state of dread and uncertainty that was rapidly undermining and destroying our great bulwark of confidence in ultimate triumph. Who that passed through it can ever forget with what anxiety we looked in that dark and trying hour for a sign of deliverance?

The great generals that we were confident the war would develop were supposed to be with that truly great and grand army on the banks of the Potomac, and we naturally looked there for some signal achievement that was to dispel the gathering clouds of despair. But the drooping spirits of the loyal millions were destined to sink lower and lower, until they were suddenly lifted up by that great, bright light of hope that unexpectedly broke upon us from the banks of the Cumberland, when the telegraph flashed the electrifying message across the continent that told how a quiet, unassuming, almost unheard-of leader had, in mid-winter, without a word of advertisement or any kind of nonsense, taken the field, and defying snow and ice and sleet and storm, had made an offensive campaign, fought a great battle, and as the result of it demanded and received the unconditional surrender of the frowning battlements of Donelson.

From that moment the eyes of his countrymen were fixed upon Ulysses S. Grant, and what language can portray with what pride, admiration and ever-increasing confidence they saw him constantly growing greater and grander as with restless activity he swept on and ever onward in the grandest series of military triumphs that it ever fell to the lot of any mortal to achieve! No man who remembers that time can ever forget how we thanked God from the bottom of our hearts for the bull-dog courage, as it was called, that

snatched victory out of defeat on the bloody fields of Shiloh. No expressions can do justice to the courage, self-reliance and strategic generalship displayed in the capture of Vicksburg and its garrison of 30,000 men. And nowhere, not even in the wars of Napoleon, can a parallel be found for the brilliant valor that planted the stars and stripes above the clouds on the Heights of Lookout, and swept Bragg, with his broken columns, like chaff before the wind, from the crests of Mission Ridge. He was at once called by the spontaneous demand of the whole loyal people, as well as by the Congress and President Lincoln, to the high rank of lieutenant general and placed in command of all the armies. He immediately planned and entered upon the execution of the closing campaigns of the war. There were some who feared that the fame he had won in the West fighting Beauregard, Pemberton and Bragg could not be maintained when pitted against Lee in Virginia. He promptly dispelled all such delusions by almost the first sentence of his instructions to his generals, when he said, in ever-memorable words, that the Army of the Potomac would act from its then present base, having for its objective point not Richmond, or any other place on the map, but the army of General Lee, against which he proposed to hammer away, as he afterward said, until by mere attrition, if not otherwise, it should be completely broken and utterly destroyed. And he did hammer away, and if Lee had not scampered away he would have been there hammering away yet. When in the midst of the bloody battles of the Wilderness he seemed, to others, to be confronted by insurmountable difficulties, and there were those about him in high authority who sought to dissuade him from his plans, he overwhelmed all opposing counsel and captured anew and by storm the heads and hearts and affections and confidence of the whole country by the

quiet, determined, Grant-like response, "I propose to fight it out on this line if it takes all summer." And he did fight it out. He drove Lee out of the Wilderness and he kept on driving him from hill to hill and river to river and earthwork to earthwork, until, by complete, triumphant and final victory, the clouds of war were forever dispersed, and the sunlight of peace once more beamed and smiled upon a torn and distracted nation, from the historic fields of Appomattox. Until this moment he had appeared only as an intrepid and invincible soldier and commander.

But suddenly and unexpectedly he now exhibited a new and entirely different character by the magnanimity he displayed toward his fallen foe, and by the invitation he so opportunely gave to the whole country, as well as to the soldiers of the Confederacy, to turn at once from the excitements and ravages of war to the pursuits of peace, by telling General Lee in that quiet, unostentatious way for which he was so noted, to have his men keep their horses, "because they would need them to do the spring plowing with."

In all the remarkable career of this most remarkable man there is nothing that more aptly portrays the greatness of his mind and the clear comprehension he had of the character of the great struggle in which he had gained such undying laurels than the absolute absence from his mind at such a moment of anything like even an approximation to any form of vanity. His whole nature seemed to be occupied with a sincere, earnest and patriotic desire to impress upon his fallen foes, in the very moment of their defeat and overthrow, that they had been whipped into surrender not for any purpose of humiliation or subjugation, but only that accepting and abiding by the results of the war in good faith they might be and remain part and parcel with us of this great Union, and continue for all time to come co-

sharers with us in the peaceful enjoyment of its priceless blessings. It was inevitable that he should be the next President of the United States, not because he wanted it to be so, but because the patriotic masses of his countrymen would not have it otherwise. He did not need to start a literary bureau or in any other unseemly way seek the place—the office sought the man, as it ever should. He was called to the presidency at a most trying time. Reconstruction measures had kept inflamed the excited passions which the war had aroused, and the bitterness of political strife was scarcely less than that of war itself. It was at a time of such intensity of feeling and malignancy of politics that, in the exercise of his high powers, he entered upon the duty of settling an exasperating dispute with England, bringing order, confidence and credit out of our distressed financial condition, and securing to every citizen of the United States, in every State of the Union, complete protection in the enjoyment of all the rights of citizenship, and, according to this great principle, bringing every seceding State back into its proper and harmonious relation to the general government. He was successful in all these great undertakings. The Geneva tribunal of arbitration averted war and satisfactorily adjusted the controversy with England, and at the same time taught the civilized world, to his great credit and ours, that peaceful methods are the best, as well as the most Christian-like, for the settlement of international difficulties.

Like a very Rock of Gibraltar he stood in the way of the flood-tide of inflation, and with his veto breaking the power of expansion, made specie resumption possible. If he did not succeed to the same extent in the matter of protecting every citizen of the Union, in every State of the Union, in the enjoyment and exercise of all his civil and political

rights it was not because of any omission of duty on his part. It was not until after his last term of office had expired that the gallant and heroic Republicans of the South were overwhelmed and compelled in many States and places to practically abandon their organization and cease to exist. To the last day that he was President the doctrine was continually proclaimed and fearlessly kept to the forefront that, as to every national right, it was the duty of the national government to protect its citizens at home as well as abroad. One of the last acts of his administration was to use the troops to protect the voters of South Carolina from intimidation and violence at the hands of the Ku-klux and the rifle clubs of that State. It was after his day before any Republican countenanced the claim that if a citizen of a State could not secure his rights under the Constitution and laws of the United States at the hands of the authorities of his State, he was without remedy except only to migrate. He had no patience with the idea that the government should have an unquestioned right, as all concede, to go into any State of the Union and there lay its hands upon any citizen of the State and compel him to go forth and do battle for it at the peril of his life, and then be powerless when its authority was duly invoked to protect that citizen in every right the government owed him, after he should be mustered out of the service and be returned to his home. He could not understand why the State lines that were so low and so easily crossed in the one case should suddenly rise so high that they could not be crossed at all in the other. In other words, General Grant was a Republican.

He believed in the Union and the Constitution. He believed in the United States of America. He believed in the people of this country. He believed in the dignity and elevation of labor. He believed in the development of our re-

sources. He believed this nation ought to be independent of every other nation on the face of the earth. He believed in a protective tariff, and was less concerned about revenue reform than he was to have enough protection to protect. But he believed first and above all in the rights of man. He believed in civil and political equality and he believed in the practical enforcement of what was theoretically proclaimed, and therefore it was that, with all the ardor of his soul, he believed in a free ballot and a fair count, and hated and despised, as he ought to, every man who apologized for or was indifferent to the crime that would prevent them. Governed by these great principles he gave to the country an administration of its civil affairs which, considering the difficulties by which it was beset, and measured by the comprehensive scope of its duties and the brilliant results of its achievements, stands among all our peace administrations without a rival. It was a fit supplement and companion piece to his military career and placed him justly with Lincoln by the side of Washington. And yet he did not please everybody. On the contrary he shared the fate of all positive and vigorous great men. He was thoroughly disliked and hated in his time. In fact, no man was ever more mercilessly criticised or more maliciously and shamefully slandered, libeled and abused than he was at every step of his immortal career. We were told that he was drunk at Shiloh—crazy and a failure in the trenches before Vicksburg—that Mission Ridge was an accident, and that he was no general, but only a bloody butcher in the Wilderness; and, while he was President, his enemies continually railed against him, claiming that he was everything that he should not be. But when he went abroad his traducers were suddenly put to shame and their villification was hushed and buried out of sight forever beneath the homage of a world. No place could be

discovered where his fame had not preceded him, and all around the globe not one human being could be found who was either so high or so low as not to account it a great honor to meet and greet him. He returned in the fullness of fame to find his countrymen more devotedly attached to him than ever before, not only because of the credit reflected upon them by the honor that had been paid to him, but also, and more particularly, because they had witnessed how, wherever he traveled and however he might be honored, he never failed to manifest a genuine, Roman-like pride—not that he had been a great general, who had led a million men to victory, nor that he had been the President of the United States, and as such the civil ruler of 50,000,000 of people, but that he was an American citizen.

That he was not the third time called to the presidency was due to considerations that had no relation whatever to him personally. On the contrary he was never more securely entrenched in the affections of the American people than he was at the very moment when the historic fight of the 306 determined followers ended in defeat at Chicago. It seemed as though he could not possibly do anything more to increase the esteem and affectionate regard in which he was held: but he could—and he did. He was unwittingly involved and overwhelmed by financial disaster, and practically at the same time smitten by a fatal malady. The unconquerable character of his nature was never more clearly demonstrated than then. It would be difficult to exaggerate the heroic fortitude and true Christian patience he displayed in the pathetic, unequal, but successful struggle that followed. Job cried out in his lamentations and said, "Oh! that mine adversary had written a book!" as if that were, as it probably is, the most surely fatal undertaking any ordinary man can assume. General Grant's last work

was to write a book. He had a double purpose to serve. He sought not only to record his recollection of the great events with which he had been identified, but also to provide against want for the faithful and deserving companion of his life and partner of all his joys and sorrows. It has been graphically said by some one that as he sat at one side of the table writing, Death sat at the opposite side impatiently waiting and watching. Without a tremor or a murmur he devoted himself to his labor of love. A merciful Providence lengthened his days and gave him strength until the last line and word had been written and his heart had been gladdened by the assurance that both his purposes had been accomplished, and then, as "gently as day into night," he passed into eternity.

The Americus Club do well to honor his memory by such celebrations as this of the day when he was born. He was not only our greatest soldier and the most distinguished and representative American who ever traveled abroad, but, next after Lincoln, he was our greatest President and our greatest Republican.

(

LIBRARY OF CONGRESS



0 013 787 985 2